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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001806

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2012

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SUBJECT: MUGABE TURNS UP HEAT ON OPPOSITION

Classified By: Political section chief Matt Harrington. Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶11. (C) The Zimbabwean government has stepped up its harassment of the MDC leadership, arresting the national treasurer in the hospital as he recuperated from major eye surgery, and raiding Morgan Tsvangirai's home in an alleged search for arms of war and subversive materials. In addition, the Home Affairs Minister has threatened to confiscate the passports of opposition party members and other Zimbabweans he accused of lobbying for the international imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe. It is clear from these recent developments that the country's continuing political crisis and consequent economic implosion are driving ZANU-PF further into a corner, leading the ruling party to intensify its internal repression and to lash out at perceived enemies. End Summary.

Dulini-Ncube Arrested

¶12. (c) On August 3, MDC national treasurer and Member of Parliament Fletcher Dulini- Ncube was arrested in connection with the 2001 murder of war veteran Cain Nkala, the latest chapter of an unfortunate saga. High Court Judge Justice George Chiweshe ruled on August 1 that the State had presented sufficient evidence against Dulini-Ncube to warrant his indictment, and effectively reversed an earlier High Court decision to grant bail. Plainclothes police officers wasted little time in arresting Dulini-Ncube at a Bulawayo hospital where he was recovering from major surgery -- the removal of one of his eyes. The MDC treasurer was kept in a police cell for six hours before his lawyer was able to convince the authorities that he required urgent medical attention. Dulini-Ncube was then allowed to return to the hospital, where he remains, but police have posted 24- hour guards in his hospital room. Dulini-Ncube is set to appear in the Bulawayo Magistrate,s Court on August 6 to be formally indicted.

¶13. (C) Dulini-Ncube, who is a diabetic in very poor health, spent several weeks in detention in November 2001, shortly after the murder. He was denied access to adequate medical care and his strict diet, which damaged his eyesight. After significant pressure was brought to bear, including by AF Assistant Secretary Secretary Kansteiner in a December 2001 meeting with Speaker of Parliament and ZANU-PF Secretary for Administration Emmerson Mnangagwa, Dulini-Ncube was released on bail. Since that time, he has dutifully complied with his bail conditions, including reporting twice a week to the police station, so Judge Chiweshe's August 1 ruling was surprising. Josphat Tsuma, Dulini-Ncube's lawyer, told poloff on August 5 that the police had insisted it was necessary to keep Dulini-Ncube in custody this time, despite the fact that he was in a great deal of pain and needed constant medical monitoring, so that he could be escorted to court for the formal indictment. The trial has been set for November 11, and some senior MDC officials have confided to us that they doubt whether Dulini-Ncube can survive another three months in prison.

¶14. (C) Comment: Considering that Dulini-Ncube has complied with his bail conditions for more than nine months and could in no way be considered a flight risk, the police action appears heavy handed and purely intimidatory. It is widely believed that the Nkala murder was committed by rival ZANU-PF supporters and war veterans, and that the government has sought to frame the MDC. As far as we are aware, the only evidence against Dulini-Ncube and the two other defendants (who are MDC activists) is a confession by the two supposed murderers, who later recanted, saying their confessions had been extracted under police torture. Nkala's widow witnessed his abduction but has not been permitted to recount in public her version of events nor to identify those responsible. It is clear that ZANU-PF is not interested in bringing to justice the real perpetrators, but rather in using the murder as a convenient opportunity to increase its pressure on a key MDC leader (one of only a handful who know the details of the

party's funding sources), seriously damaging his health and draining the financially-strapped party of yet more legal fees.

Tsvangirai's house searched

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15. (C) On Sunday, August 4 -- the day after Dulini-Ncube's detention -- heavily-armed police, some in riot gear, searched the home of MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. They first produced a warrant authorizing a search for arms of war, subversive materials, and illegal immigrants. Not surprisingly, they found none of the above, but took away several documents Tsvangirai described as "news items," and confiscated the pickup truck used by his special advisor, Gandi Mudzingwa. Tsvangirai criticized the search as "desperation of the worst kind," and asked "who in his right senses would keep arms of war, subversive materials or so-called illegal immigrants in his home?" Mudzingwa surmised to us that the search might presage an intensification of harassment against the MDC leadership, and said the party needed to brace itself.

Passports to be Seized

16. (C) When the Politburo's wheelchair-bound deputy secretary for the handicapped, Joshua Malinga, was barred

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entry to the United Kingdom in late July because of the EU travel ban, ZANU-PF's propaganda machinery kicked into high gear. Information Minister Jonathan Moyo accused the British government of "going bananas" and harassing disabled people who required assistance, and he warned that perhaps it was time for the GOZ to draw up its own list of foreign visitors to be denied entry to Zimbabwe (a position that Foreign Minister Mudenge and other officials have since repudiated). In more worrisome remarks apparently aimed at the MDC, Minister for Home Affairs John Nkomo said the GOZ was contemplating revoking the passports of those Zimbabweans who had allegedly campaigned abroad for the imposition of sanctions against Zimbabwe. Having a Zimbabwean passport is not a right but a privilege, Nkomo insisted. Mudzingwa told us that his party's leadership had interpreted Nkomo's comments as a sign that the passports of key leaders would be confiscated imminently. He noted that the passports of Tsvangirai, Secretary-General Welshman Ncube, and shadow

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agriculture minister Renson Gasela had already been seized pending their trial on (contrived) treason charges in November. The likely next targets are Vice-President Gibson Sibanda and Deputy Secretary-General Gift Chimanikire.

Comment

17. (C) The Mugabe government's gut reaction to Zimbabwe's continuing political crisis and its disastrous economic effects is not to seek a reconciliation that mitigates the damage to their country, but to lash out at those they hold responsible for their predicament. Mugabe and his inner circle continue to consider the MDC a major threat to ZANU-PF's 22-year hold on power, and are gradually tightening the noose around the necks of the MDC's leaders. Suspension of travel documents is likely only the latest move in the GOZ's efforts to emasculate the party that has dared to challenge Mugabe's perceived right to rule Zimbabwe as long as he chooses.

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